# STEADFASTNESS

IN

# RELIGION,

RECOMMENDED AND ENFORCED;

A

# SERMON.

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BY THE REV. THOMAS REESE,

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SOUTH CAROLINA.

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"*Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*"

PAUL.

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*PHILADELPHIA:*

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M,DCC,XCIII.

TO THE

# CHURCHES

OF

WILLIAMSBURG, INDIAN-TOWN, SALEM,

HOPEWELL AND AIMWELL.

THE following diſcourſe, the ſubſtance of which was originally preached without the moſt diſtant thought of publication is now, at your requeſt, preſented to you from the preſs. Had the author been governed entirely by his own judgment, it is not probable it would ever have been publiſhed. But as we are not always the beſt judges of our own performances, he has ſo far ſubmitted to your opinion, as to comply with your requeſt---not, however, without ſome apprehenſions of being blamed, for adding one more to the many *trite* ſermons, which are little read and leſs regarded.

Circumſtances which awaken the paſſions, and intereſt the heart, frequently, lead us to judge too favourably of a diſcourſe; and to allow it greater merit than thoſe who judge coolly are willing to admit. It muſt be granted, however, that thoſe very circumſtances give it additional weight, and carry it home with peculiar energy to the minds of the hearers. The idea of the author's removal to a diſtant part of God's vineyard, and the

probability of his never having another opportunity of addreſſing you from the pulpit, more than any thing in the diſcourſe itſelf, have induced you to place a value on it, to which it has perhaps no juſt claim. Your partiality, however, to the preacher, and the affectionate regard to his memory which you diſcovered in your requeſt, though they may have ſomewhat miſled you in your judgment of the performance itſelf, encourage him to hope, that, through the divine bleſſing, it may be uſeful to you. The reſpectful attention, and deep impreſſion which appeared in the aſpect of the audience, afford a pleaſing preſage, that it will be read with the like attention, and a revival of ſimilar impreſſions.

To the motives juſt mentioned for complying with your requeſt, permit the author to add---his deſire in this public manner, to expreſs his deep ſenſe of the many favours you have conferred upon him; and to leave you a monument of his gratitude, which may remain, when he is ſleeping in the ſolitary houſe of death, and his lips ſealed in the ſilence of the grave. He never can, but the God whom he ſerves *can* and he hopes *will* reward you. May the divine benediction reſt upon you and your poſterity. With ſincere and ardent prayers for your felicity in time and eternity, he

ſubſcribes himſelf
your obliged ſervant
in the goſpel.
THOMAS REESE.

# STEDFASTNESS IN RELIGION, &c.

## REV. ii. 25.

### HOLD FAST TILL I COME.

PATIENCE, courage, and perſeverance in a good cauſe, command reſpect and merit applauſe. They are always reckoned honourable and praiſe-worthy. The cauſe of religion is not only good, but infinitely important and intereſting. It is the cauſe of righteouſneſs and truth; the cauſe of God and of all holy beings; and for the encouragement of all who are engaged in it, it is the cauſe which ſhall finally prevail. To perſevere in this cauſe, therefore, is the higheſt wiſdom, as well as the higheſt honour: to deſert it, is to add folly to diſgrace and infamy. Accordingly, in the inſpired writings, we are frequently exhorted to ſtedfaſtneſs in the faith, and repeatedly warned againſt apoſtacy. To multiply particular paſſages to this purpoſe is unneceſſary. The epiſtles to the ſeven churches of Aſia, furniſh us with a ſufficient number. In theſe the moſt awful threatenings are denounced againſt apoſtates; the greateſt rewards promiſed to thoſe who perſevere in faith and holineſs. To the church of Smyrna, "ſaith the firſt and the laſt, who was dead and is alive, be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—to the church of Philadelphia—"Hold that faſt which thou haſt, that no man take thy crown;"—To the church of Thyatira, in the words of our Text—"Hold faſt till I come."

In the beginning of this epiſtle, the church of Thyatira is highly commended. "I know thy works and charity, and ſervice, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the laſt to be more than the firſt." This church was in a flouriſhing condition. Her members were making remarkable progreſs in religion. Their good works were daily more and more conſpicuous. They were growing in grace. The contrary was the ſtate of at leaſt ſome of the other churches. Religion was on the decline among them, and, therefore, they are exhorted to "repent and do their firſt works." But notwithſtanding the praiſe given to this church, he whoſe eyes were as a flame of fire, ſaw ſomewhat amiſs, which called for reproof. "Notwithſtanding I have a few things againſt thee, becauſe thou ſuffereſt that woman Jezebel, which calleth herſelf a propheteſs, to teach and to ſeduce my ſervants, to commit fornication, and to ſacrifice things offered unto idols." Some interpreters have thought that by Jezebel is here meant ſome individual female heretic; and Dr. Scott ſuppoſes ſhe was Helena the harlot of Simon Magus. But it is more likely, that under the name Jezebel, is here deſignated a whole ſet of heretics, who reſembled that wicked and idolatrous woman in their principles and practices. It is more than probable, they were the ſame with the Nicolaitans, frequently mentioned by John. They held the lawfulneſs of idolatry and fornication, and endeavoured to propagate theſe licentious tenets among others. Their practice no doubt correſponded with their principles; and yet it ſeems the church ſuffered them to continue in communion with her. For this they are rebuked. Hence, by the way, we may ſee, and it is worthy of particular notice, that a church of Chriſt may contract great guilt, by admitting, or continuing in their communion, thoſe who are corrupt in their principles, and immoral in their lives. After threatening theſe profligate ſinners with the moſt terrible puniſhments, our Saviour proceeds to ſpeak comfort and encouragement to thoſe who continued ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of that goſpel which they had embraced.



"But unto you I ſay, and the reſt in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan as they ſpeak, I will put upon you none other burden but that which ye have already, hold faſt till I come." He aſſures them that they ſhould be burthened with no other injunctions than thoſe which they had already received; with no other trials and afflictions, than thoſe which they had already endured; and admoniſhes them to perſevere in the ſame purity of doctrine and practice, for which they had hitherto been ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed. "Hold faſt till I come."

Different times or events are, in the New Teſtament, deſigned by "the coming of Chriſt." Without entering into a minute diſcuſſion on this ſubject, which does not comport with our preſent deſign, we only obſerve,—That the coming here mentioned, may perhaps be referred to the death of every true believer. There is a ſenſe in which Chriſt may be ſaid then to come. He then comes to receive his faithful followers to himſelf—to deliver them from all their afflictions and trials, and place them in the moſt perfect ſecurity, beyond the reach of temptation. So that if they can hold out till then, their conflicts will be over, and all their dangers paſt. Taken in this ſenſe, the exhortation in the text is exactly parallel with that to the church of Smyrna; "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

In further diſcourſing from theſe words, we purpoſe, through divine aid, to attempt the following things.—

I. To ſhow particularly what we are here enjoined to hold faſt.
II. Point out ſome of thoſe temptations which uſually lead to apoſtacy.
III. Set before you the motives which the goſpel affords to excite us to hold faſt, and be ſtedfaſt to the end.
IV. Conclude with an exhortation ſuited to the ſubject and the occaſion.

Agreeably to this order, we are,

I. To ſhow particularly what we are here enjoined to hold faſt.

Every ſenſible hearer anticipates me in ſuppoſing that the thing to be held faſt is the Chriſtian Religion—that ſyſtem of faith and morals, which Jeſus of Nazareth, the great Prophet of the church brought down from heaven, and publiſhed to a guilty world. This was the religion preached to the Aſiatic churches, and confirmed by miracles. This religion they had embraced in its native purity and ſimplicity, unadulterated with any foreign mixture; and in this they are exhorted to perſevere.

But to be more particular—our religion divides itſelf into two principal branches, doctrines and precepts; or in other words, what we are to *believe* and what we are to *practice*. In both theſe we muſt be ſtedfaſt, if we would comply with the exhortation in the Text.

1ſt. We muſt hold faſt the doctrines of our holy religion. The bounds which we have preſcribed to ourſelves, will not permit us to enlarge upon, or even mention all theſe. Among the moſt important we reckon the following.——The natural depravity of man;—the deplorable circumſtances in to which he is brought by the fall.—His moral inability to recover himſelf;—the neceſſity of regeneration, of faith and repentance;—juſtification by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt;—ſalvation by free grace, through the merits of a redeemer;—the neceſſity of the ſupernatural influences of the holy Spirit, for the illumination, ſanctification, and comfort of believers, and their perſeverance in the ways of holineſs, that they may be made "meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light." Theſe doctrines, and thoſe inſeparably connected with them, forming one complete and conſiſtent ſyſtem, are of ſupreme importance. They appear to us clearly revealed in the word of God; they are the doctrines of the reformation, derived from the pure fountains of eternal truth; "they make the ſubſtance of all the proteſtant confeſſions; they are the glory of proteſtant churches;" and



have been ſealed with frequent and abundant effuſions of proteſtant blood. Theſe, my brethren, are, moreover, the doctrines of your ſtandards, in which moſt of you have been educated; and which have been tranſmitted to you from your pious forefathers*. Permit me to add—theſe are the doctrines which, during the ſpace of nearly twenty years, I have preached to you ſtatedly, and occaſionally in the neighbouring congregations. I have long examined them with all the candour and attention of which I am capable; and have never yet ſeen ſufficient reaſon to relinquiſh them. That I have found ſome of them attended with difficulties, and liable to plauſible objections, would be a mark of ignorance or of arrogance not to acknowledge; but I always found every oppoſite ſcheme loaded with much greater difficulties, and open to more unanſwerable objections. The longer I conſider them, the more fully I am convinced of their truth; and it is moſt probable I ſhall live the reſt of my life, and die in the belief of them. Impreſſed with a deep ſenſe of their neceſſity and importance, and reſting all my own hopes upon them, wonder not, if I am ſolicitous that you ſhould retain them. Eſteem them highly then; cleave to them for they are your life. Build upon them as the only ſtable foundation of hope; hold them faſt as the ſure anchor of your ſouls.

I would not indeed have you to be bigots in the proper ſenſe of that word, nor of a cenſorious and uncharitable diſpoſition towards thoſe who may differ from you: but neither would I have you to be unſtable like "a wave of the ſea toſſed too and fro with every wind of doctrine." There is a mean between theſe two ex-

* Though preſcription cannot be fairly pleaded in favour of religious doctrines, nor their antiquity admitted as a proof either of their truth or excellence; we may, however, ſafely infer both the one and the other from their moral influence. If the doctrines above mentioned, have been found above all others, to promote holineſs; and if our anceſtors, who embraced them, were eminent for their piety, and the purity of their lives; this ſhould be allowed to have weight; and ought to operate as an argument for adhering to them.

tremes altogether consistent with the christian character. You may "hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," without that unsocial and even hostile spirit which has so often disgraced the professors of religion. Living in an age when a criminal indifference to the inestimable truths of the gospel, is so frequently honoured with the specious name of *liberality;* and a steady adherence, to them as often stigmatized with the odious epithet of *bigotry*, we ought to guard against a temporizing spirit, and not suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by names. If a firm adherence to those doctrines which upon fair enquiry, you apprehend to be the truth, must be called bigotry; I would rather see you bigots in that sense, than yielding to that instability and licentiousness of opinion, which are the fashion of the times, and so strongly mark the characters of too many professors. Search the scriptures, listen to the voice of reason, without which divine revelation can be of no use to you; pray earnestly for the illuminations of the Holy Spirit; and having in this manner once fixed upon a system of doctrines, grasp it with a manly firmness and hold it fast.

2. If you would comply with the injunction in the text, you must persevere in the practice of religion.

"Faith without works is dead." Doctrines which only float in the head, but neither reach the heart nor influence the life, can profit you nothing. Sound principles without a corresponding practice, will be of no avail. Experience clearly evinces, that men may, in appearance at least, be orthodox in their principles, and yet immoral in their lives. We have known orthodox drunkards, orthodox knaves, and even orthodox profane cursers and swearers. And some of these appear quite zealous for the faith—champions of orthodoxy, and exclaim loudly and bitterly against those who differ from them, and are reckoned unsound in their principles. How absurd, my brethren, is all this! You may without hesitation mark such men for



the worst of all heretics. For as a great writer well observes, "A bad life is the worst of all heresies." It is not enough then, to hold fast the doctrines of christianity; you must persevere in the practice of it.

Christian practice is comprehended under three heads. The duty we owe to God—the duty we owe to our neighbour—the duty we owe to ourselves. We cannot now stand to enlarge upon each of these. They have been often pointed out to you; and if you are unacquainted with them, it must be in consequence of your own criminal negligence and inattention. Let a few general observations on each suffice.

1st. The duties we to we to God, are of the first importance, and merit the highest place in the scale of christian duties. They are of unquestionable obligation; and the neglect of them in the highest degree criminal and dangerous. Notwithstanding this, it is as true, as it is lamentable, that many who call themselves christians undervalue these duties. Of morality they speak highly; and it is plain, from their conduct, that on this they rest their hopes of heaven. With them, devotion, or a strict attention to the duties of religion, passes for superstition, and is reckoned an unequivocal evidence of hypocrisy. Accordingly, they live in the total or habitual neglect of these duties; and seem careful to shun every appearance of piety, lest they should be thought hypocritical or superstitious. Justice, charity, humanity, hospitality, they applaud. If they are honest and upright in their dealings—if they wrong no man—if they are humane, charitable, compassionate,—it is enough for them. They look upon prayer and other acts of religious worship, as of little or no moment. The omission of these is reckoned either no crime at all, or a very small one, which will be easily overlooked, when they come to give their account. Living in the total neglect, or careless performance of the most important religious duties, they reckon themselves as good as the most devout of their neighbours. A moment's reflection is sufficient to shew the shocking absurdity, and even impiety of such

ſentiments. The importance of thoſe duties which we owe to our neighbour, is admitted in the fulleſt ſenſe, as will appear hereafter. But are not the duties we owe to God, at leaſt equally important? Has the God who made us no claims upon us? Is not ſomething due to the greateſt, the beſt, and moſt, amiable of all beings? He is our rightful Lord and Sovereign—we live upon the bounty of his hand, we drink of the ſtreams of his goodneſs. From him all our mercies, comforts, and enjoyments flow. This moment he is "granting us life and favour, and his viſitation preſerveth our ſpirits." Have the calls of gratitude then loſt all their force? Has ingratitude ceaſed to be a crime? Shall we ſay that the perfections of the Deity, our relation to him, and the benefits he confers upon us, create no obligations? All the duties which God requires are reaſonable in the higheſt degree. They are founded on his attributes, and neceſſarily reſult from thoſe relations in which we ſtand to him, as creatures. God is the ſource and ſum of all excellence and perfection. And does not reaſon dictate, that ſupreme excellence demands ſupreme affection? His overflowing bounty and unwearied beneficence, call for our warmeſt gratitude. He is a God of awful glory, tremendous majeſty, and inflexible juſtice; and therefore ought to be feared. His power, his wiſdom, and his goodneſs, render him the proper object of truſt, and teach us humbly to ſubmit to all his diſpenſations. Prayer, praiſe, all the acts of religious worſhip, due to our creator, are no more than the proper expreſſions of thoſe diſpoſitions, which correſpond to his perfections; and our obligation to them is as eternal and unchangeable, as the nature of the Deity himſelf. Notwithſtanding all this, is it not aſtoniſhing, that any one who believes there is a God, and eſpecially, who names the name of Chriſt, ſhould dare to make light of religious duties; or imagine that thoſe which he owes to his fellow-men, are of greater importance and ſuperior obligation? Whatever ſuch profeſſors may think, and how highly ſoever they may value themſelves on the practice of morality,



they may be aſſured, that if they neglect the duties of religion, they have not the moſt diſtant claim to the name of chriſtians. Nor ought it to paſs unnoticed on this ſubject, that religion is the only ſure and proper baſis of Morality. He who neglects his duty to his God, will always be deficient in the duties he owes to his neighbour. If you violate the ſtrongeſt and moſt endearing obligations, and wrong your maker by refuſing him that homage which is his juſt due, what ſecurity can we have, that you will not wrong your neighbour alſo, when preſſed by ſome great and urgent temptation? Be not deceived, my brethren, it is impoſſible for you habitually to neglect the duties of religion, without contracting the deepeſt guilt. You cannot reſtrain prayer before God, nor deſpiſe the ordinances of his houſe, without being chargeable with the moſt ſhocking ingratitude, and endangering your precious immortal ſouls. If, therefore, you deſire to ſee the face of God in mercy, you muſt be diligent in the practice of theſe duties. You muſt live godly, as well as righteouſly and ſoberly. Agreeably to the exhortation in the text, you muſt perſevere in the paths of piety. You muſt hold faſt the practice as well as the profeſſion of religion; and "be ſtedfaſt, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." I have been the more earneſt and copious on this head, becauſe I have lived to ſee religious duties become ſo unfaſhionable, and the worſhip of God, both in public and private ſo much neglected, even by thoſe who profeſs themſelves chriſtians,

2d. The ſecond branch of chriſtian practice comprehends the duties we owe to our neighbour.

Theſe are all ſummed up, by our Saviour, in one word,—"Thou ſhalt *love* thy neighbonr as thyſelf." The firſt and great commandment is, that we ſhould love God with a ſupreme affection. The ſecond is, that we ſhould love our neighbour as ourſelves. Hence the whole moral law is comprehended in one word—LOVE. *Love*, love to God and love to man, is the fulfilling of the law. As a ſupreme and unfeign-

ed love to God naturally leads to a careful and conscientious performance of all the duties we owe to him: so in like manner all the social and relative duties necessarily flow from a sincere love to our fellow-men. That benevolent disposition which our religion requires, will operate uniformly and powerfully, and at all times prompt us to every kind office and labour of love towards our neighbour. If this law of kindness be in our hearts, we will study to govern our lives by that golden rule of our Saviour, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." By a proper application of this short, but comprehensive rule, and by taking it for our guide, we shall neither mistake nor omit, the duties which are due to our fellow-men.

We have already noticed the great importance of these duties. As there can be no such thing as complete morality without piety: so it is more absurd, if possible, to suppose there can be true piety without morality. Christianity is an uniform consistent system. All its parts harmonize, and give strength and beauty to each other. Infinite wisdom pervades the whole. The character of the genuine christian is consistent throughout. In him piety and morality are united. God has joined them together, and he attempts not to separate them. But some there are who assume the name of christians, and yet are shamefully deficient in the duties they owe to their neighbour. They are apparently strict, at least in the external duties of religion; they are steady and punctual in their attendance upon the public worship of God; pray in their families; read and hear with apparent seriousness and devotion. All this is well—but how do we blush when we come to view the counterpart! We then find that they are dishoneſt in their dealings, and scruple not to over-reach and defraud their neighbour—so hard hearted, that distress in its most piteous shape cannot move them—so selfish, that they care for nobody but themselves—so destitute of charity, that they shut up their bowels of compassion from the poor, and turn a deaf ear to the



cries of the widow and the fatherless: and what is worse if possible—that they discover an envious, malicious, vindictive temper, and are prone to defamation, strife and litigation. For the honour of religion, we hope such characters are rare; but yet we have known some such: And what shall we say of them? The gentlest language we can use is, that the religion of such men is vain; their appearances of sanctity nothing but splendid hypocrisy, and all their religious performances an odious farce.

Let all such remember the words of our Saviour, "Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye devour widows houses and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore, ye shall receive the greater condemnation." The most strict and scrupulous attention to the duties of religion, cannot, in the smallest degree, atone for the neglect of those which you owe to your fellow-men. We cannot commute with God in this manner. "These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone." "He that loveth God loveth his brother also." And if you love your brother, you will perform your duty to him. If you neglect this, it is a proof that you love neither the one nor the other. And if the love of God be not in you, your loud or your long prayers, and all your other religious performances, are an abomination to him. Instead of procuring you favour at the bar of heaven, they will inflame your account, and heighten your condemnation.

Do you wish then to maintain a consistent character, and adorn the religion you profess? you must diligently attend to the practice of all the social and relative duties, and persevere in them to the end. Give to every one his due. "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Thus your conduct will be consistent, christianity will appear in its native lustre and beauty; and "others seeing your good works will glorify our father who is in heaven." The duties which more immediately respect ourselves, constitute the third branch of christian practice.

Chriſtianity conſults our happineſs in time and eternity. That ſobriety, moderation, temperance, and ſelf-denial which our religion requires, are calculated to promote health of body, as well as peace and tranquillity of mind. The practice of theſe, even though this world were the only theatre of our exiſtence, would be the higheſt wiſdom. How numerous are the victims of ſenſuality, of drunkenneſs, and of luſt? How many miſeries do the ſons of riot and diſſipation bring upon themſelves and all thoſe who are nearly connected with them? What a fatal train of evils follows the unreſtrained indulgence of vicious appetites and unruly paſſions? It is a duty, therefore, which we owe to ourſelves, and which our religion enjoins, to ſubdue theſe irregular appetites and paſſions; to keep under the body; to crucify the fleſh with the affections and luſts, and to bring the whole man in ſubjection to the ſpirit and precepts of thegoſpel. This is neceſſary to complete the chriſtian character, and conform us to our divine pattern, "who hath given us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps"—whoſe life was a living lecture and exhibited every grace and every virtue in the fulleſt luſtre, for the imitation of all his followers.

Would you be his diſciples? would you grow up to the ſtature of perfect men in Chriſt? To the practice of the duties you owe to God and your neighbour, you muſt add the diligent performance of thoſe which are due to yourſelves. While you continue under the dominion of drunkenneſs or of luſt, and ſlaves to ſenſuality—while you are under ignominious ſubjection to vicious and unbridled appetites, and ſuffer yourſelves to be governed by imperious, hoſtile, and unhallowed paſſions, we cannot admit you to be the diſciples of the holy Jeſus. You may call yourſelves by his name, but your conduct too plainly demonſtrates, that you never imbibed his pure and placid ſpirit. While this is your ſtate, you ought not to be numbered among his friends upon earth, and you can never enjoy the reward of his ſervants in heaven. Remember, my brethren, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs,



hatred, wrath, ſtrife, drunkenneſs, reveilings, and ſuch like," are all the works of the fleſh; and we have the authority of an apoſtle to declare, that "they who do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." Nothing that "defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie," can enter into the gates of the heavenly city. If, then, you would walk worthy of your holy calling, you muſt be careful to ſhun theſe and every other ſin, and continue ſtedfaſt in the practice of all the duties you owe to God, your neighbour, and yourſelves. The moſt ſtrict attention to any one of theſe branches of chriſtian practice ſingly, cannot entitle you to the honourable appellation of ſincere chriſtians. All muſt combine. It is the whole aſſemblage which conſtitutes that illuſtrious character, and exhibits the diſciple of Jeſus in full beauty and proportion. The diligent practice of theſe and a ſteady perſeverance in them, aſſimilate him to his heavenly maſter, afford comfortable evidence of his heavenly birth, and prepare him for the heavenly inheritance.

Having ſhown, at conſiderable length, the extent of the duty enjoined in the text, we now proceed in the

II. Second place, to point out ſome of thoſe temptations which lead to apoſtacy.

This appears altogether proper on this ſubject: for in order to be on your guard, it is neceſſary, that you ſhould be apprized of your danger. And—

1ſt. A too great fondneſs for novelty, and a diſpoſition to change, frequently lead to apoſtacy. Under this particular, reference is had principally to apoſtacy in doctrines; which however is uſually followed by apoſtacy in practice.

We live in an age of revolutions. Changes are not leſs frequent in religious than in political opinions. Religious liberty we enjoy in its utmoſt extent. This is no doubt a bleſſing; but like many other bleſſings, it is too often abuſed and turned into licentiouſneſs. New religious, ſects are riſing; new doctrines are broached. Principles as dangerous to the ſouls of

men, as they are unfriendly to morality and civil happineſs, are advanced with great confidence, and propagated with great zeal. Theſe principles are by too many eagerly embraced, and the pure and ſimple doctrines of the goſpel, in which they have been educated, are rejected. Some men are naturally fickle. Unſteady in their temper, and prone to change, they are fond of every thing new; and for that reaſon only, think it eligible. If a new preacher come into their neighbourhood, they are curious to hear him; and if he advance any new or uncommon doctrine, and raiſe ſome plauſible objections againſt old opinions, it is ſurpriſing with what facility they can give up the moſt important truths, and fall in with him. So unſtable are ſome, that they ſeem to have no fixed principles at all; but are continually wavering; at one time, embracing *this* ſyſtem, at another, *that* which is directly oppoſite. Such a temper is beneath the dignity of a wiſe man; and to indulge it, is altogether unworthy of a chriſtian. It frequently leads him to depart from the truth, and to embrace the moſt abſurd and pernicious errors. Profeſſors ought, therefore, to be on their guard againſt this unſteady and changeable diſpoſition, leſt it ſhould prove a ſnare to them, and a temptation to renounce the profeſſion of the goſpel. The apoſtle Paul has warned us againſt this, "that we, henceforth, be no more children toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſlight of men, and cunning craftineſs whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Religious doctrines, like medicines, are not the worſe but the better for being old and of tried efficacy. Novel ſentiments in religion, though they may ſometimes be true, ought always to be admitted with great caution; and not without the moſt ſtrict and careful examination. However ſpecious, if they be found repugnant to any of the *leading truths* of the goſpel, they ought to be rejected without heſitation. Plauſible objections may be made againſt the doctrines we wiſh you to hold faſt; but ought you for that reaſon to quit your hold of them? by no means. On this principle



you might give up almoſt all your moſt uſeful knowledge. For if we except the ſcience of mathematics, there are few truths which philoſophy or even common ſenſe hath eſtabliſhed, againſt which a ſubtle diſputant may not bring objections which you cannot anſwer. But will you, therefore, give up thoſe truths? I think not. So in like manner, you ought not to renounce a religious doctrine as erroneous, becauſe a caviller may be able to raiſe objections againſt it which a common illiterate chriſtian cannot eaſily remove. Permit me to give one inſtance out of many to illuſtrate this.

You have been taught to believe, that God foreknows all things, and "hath foreordained whatſoever comes to paſs." But an objector comes forward and tells you, that if this be ſo, then it will follow that all events are certain and fixed as fate—that all the actions of men are neceſſary; and conſequently, that there is no ſuch thing as free agency, virtue or vice in the univerſe: becauſe no man can be juſtly either praiſed or blamed for what he muſt do, and cannot poſſibly avoid. Suppoſe you are not able to anſwer theſe and ſimilar objections againſt the divine preſcience, and to reconcile, in a ſatisfactory manner, this perfection of the Deity with free agency and human liberty; muſt you, for that reaſon, renounce the doctrine of God's foreknowledge, or believe that men are nothing but mere machines, and incapable of virtue or vice, praiſe or blame? You ought to do neither the one nor the other. There are as many arguments for the divine preſcience as there are prophecies in ſcripture. Every man *feels* that he is a free agent; and it is the firſt born of abſurdities to deny it. Both theſe doctrines, therefore, ought to be retained. Though you may not be able to reconcile them and ſhew how they are conſiſtent, others who are better acquainted with theſe ſubjects may. And though no man upon earth could remove all objections on this head, and fully reconcile the *moral certainty* or *neceſſity* of events (which follows from the divine preſcience as infallibly as from the di-

vine decree,) with the freedom of the human will; yet we ought not to give up thoſe important truths*.

What then is the proper inference from all this? It is, that we ſhould not renounce our religious principles at the call of every bold and furious declaimer, who roundly aſſerts every thing, but proves nothing—who has learned to ſay the moſt horrid things againſt "*divine decrees, election, predeſtination, the final perſeverance of the ſaints,*" &c. and to draw the moſt frightful conſequences from doctrines which he has never condeſcended to ſtudy, and which, if rightly underſtood, afford no juſt grounds for ſuch conſequences. At leaſt before you forſake the old, and ſubſtitute a new and oppoſite ſyſtem of doctrines, you ought carefully to examine, whether it be not liable to greater objections than that which you are about to relinquiſh.

2d. The temporal inconveniences which ariſe from the profeſſion, and practice of religion are often a temptation to apoſtacy.

In all paſt ages of the church, the open profeſſion of certain religious doctrines, has expoſed men to great hardſhips and ſufferings. This we know was the caſe in the primitive church particularly, and during the time of the reformation from popery: and what frequent apoſtacies aroſe from this cauſe, is ſufficiently evident from hiſtory. Many indeed ſuffered with becoming fortitude, and "loved not their lives to the death." But multitudes could not withſtand the temptation. To ſuffer the loſs of all things,—of eſtate,

* Every reader will ſee the impropriety of entering into a diſcuſſion of this ſubject, in the preſent diſcourſe. They who wiſh to ſee this matter explained in the moſt full, and ſatisfactory manner, are referred to preſident Edwards on the "freedom of the will." who has treated it with that preciſion, that depth and invincible force of argument, which diſtinguiſh all the writings of that great and good man. He has long ſince thrown the *gauntlet* to the numerous adverſaries of Calviniſm; but none of them has yet dared to accept the challenge. The truth is, his book on that ſubject is unanſwerable; and the author of this diſcourſe, here takes the liberty to recommend it to all his readers as one of the ableſt and moſt rational defences of thoſe doctrines which are uſually ſtyled Calviniſtic.





of reputation, and even of life itſelf, was a ſacriſice which they had not the courage to make; and therefore they renounced their religion. Thanks be to God, we live in a land where the civil power intermeddles not with religious tenets. We are at full liberty to profeſs and even propagate what doctrines we pleaſe, without diſturbance from that quarter. Hence the inconveniences, and conſequently the temptations ariſing from the open profeſſion of the doctrines of the goſpel, are few and ſmall. Our religious opinions may expoſe us to the contempt of ſome, which it may require ſome courage to withſtand; but which, under a government like ours, can be attended with no great loſs or ſuffering. Both the dangers and the temptations which ariſe from the practice of true and undefiled religion, are much greater; and againſt theſe we ought to be more on our guard. The apoſtle Paul tells us, that "all who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution." And this, in ſome degree, holds good in every age. Since the beginning of the world there has been a conſtant enmity and oppoſition of the ſeed of the ſerpent againſt the ſeed of the woman. Cain ſlew his bro-"ther Abel; and wherfore ſlew he him?" the reaſon is "remarkable—becauſe his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." They who are ſingularly devout and holy in their lives; bold and faithful in oppoſing and reproving ſin, may always lay their accounts to meet with hatred and perſecution. Their conduct is a ſtanding reproach upon the irreligious and profligate part of mankind—a ſilent but ſevere reproof of their vicious and immoral lives. This galls them; they cannot bear it with patience; and ſeldom fail to retaliate. For this frequent opportunities offer. Such perſecutors are moſt commonly in elevated ſtations; and generally poſſeſs the greateſt ſhare of wealth, which not only *gives*, but is *itſelf* power. Of theſe advantages they avail themſelves; and frequently make their faithful and pious reprovers, feel the weight of their reſentment. Civil laws afford but a ſlender ſecurity to a poor man, when the rich and the powerful are diſpoſed to in-

jure and oppreſs. Though they may not be able to take away his life, his reputation and property often lie at their mercy. The profeſſors of religion know all this; and it has too often a moſt unhappy influence upon them. Hereby they are ſometimes tempted to relinquiſh the practice of religion altogether, or to abate ſomething of their ſtrictneſs in duty. They become leſs devout, leſs exemplary in their lives, leſs bold and zealous in oppoſing and diſcountenancing vice, and rebuking ſinners, eſpecially thoſe of high rank. Dreading the reſentment of the rich and the great, they are often guilty of criminal compliances in accommodating themſelves to their manners or their opinions, that they may eſcape their perſecutions or conciliate their favour. Too many profeſſors reſemble the ſeed ſown on ſtony ground, which ſprung up and flouriſhed a while; but when the ſun was riſen it was parched and ſoon withered away: ſo theſe, "when tribulation or perſecution cometh, for the ſake of the goſpel, by and by they are offended." As long as the profeſſion and practice of religion fall in with their temporal intereſt, they are ſtedfaſt; but when they find theſe two claſh; when they are called upon to take up their croſs, they turn back and walk no more with Jeſus. They wiſh to ſerve God with what coſts them nothing. So far are they from being willing to ſuffer the loſs of all things for Chriſt, that the proſpect of parting with a little worldly gain, or ſuffering a little in their reputation, deters them. Even theſe ſmall ſacrifices they cannot think of making. Hence in the ſeaſon of peril, in the hour of perſecution and temptation, they turn their backs upon Chriſt. If, then, you would be ſtedfaſt in the practice of religion, and perſevere to the end, you muſt watch againſt temptations from this quarter. For this purpoſe nothing can be more effectual than to form a proper eſtimate of earthly things. A deep ſenſe of their emptineſs and uncertainty, will ſhow the folly of an immoderate attachment to them, and annihilate the force of every temptation to apoſtacy which can aſſail us on that ſide.



3d. Sinful ſhame and the fear of contempt or of ridicule, are great and dangerous temptations to apoſtacy.

Theſe are all thrown together; becauſe they are ſo nearly related, and frequently co-operate to produce the ſame effect. The ſentiment of ſhame operates with prodigious force. It often impoſes uſeful reſtraints and anſwers valuable purpoſes: But when it has its ſource in an erroneous eſtimate of things, and is improperly directed, it is productive of infinite miſchief in the world. How many are aſhamed of what is their higheſt honour, and glory in their ſhame? Few things have a more powerful effect, eſpecially on young and ingenuous minds, than the fear of immediate contempt. This gives the opinions of the world, and particularly of thoſe with whom we moſt frequently aſſociate, a great and often a fatal influence over our actions. Ridicule is a keen weapon, cuts deep, and inflicts a painful wound. When all other means fail, this often ſucceeds in deterring us from duty, and betraying us into ſin. It is painful to reflect how many are prompted either to renounce or diſguiſe their religious profeſſion, from one or other of theſe cauſes. How many apoſtates do we ſee through falſe ſhame? how many, from a dread of appearing contemptible or ridiculous in the eyes of the world? how many who appeared to ſet out well, and promiſed fair to adorn the doctrine of their Saviour, have ſo far apoſtatized, that they plainly appear to be aſhamed of both the profeſſion and practice of religion? They ſee the ſpirit of the world oppoſed to piety—they hear it called ſuperſtition or hypocriſy. The fear of God and a ſtrict attention to religious duty, are reckoned meanneſs of ſpirit, and expoſe them to the ſcoffs of their companions. They have not ſufficient fortitude to bear all this. They are diſmayed, and ſhrinking from reproach, bid adieu to religion, and are borne down by the ſtream of vicious cuſtom.

This part of my diſcourſe addreſſes itſelf with peculiar propriety to young profeſſors, who have in a ſolemn manner dedicated themſelves to the ſervice of God. You are young and inexperienced; and re-

proach has usually a deeper impression on you than on those who are more advanced in life. Your temptations here are great, and your danger proportionably great. Permit one who has been young, and who, from experience, knows something of your dangerous situation, to give you faithful and timely warning. It requires uncommon patience and uncommon fortitude to arm you against the various assaults of "the world which lieth in wickedness." You must prepare yourselves for "trials of cruel mockings." The indignant smile of cool contempt, the sarcastic jeer, the laugh of scorn, keen reproach, and bitter obloquy, are the arms with which you may expect to be assailed; and they are not easily withstood. These often shake the resolution of those who have been long in the habits of religion. What then must be their effect, when all played off in their turns, against those who are but just entering on the christian life? If the hardy veteran too often gives ground, what must be the fate of the young soldier and the raw recruit? The armour must be more than human, it must be divine, which can defend you against such keen weapons. If you be such as we wish you to be, sober, righteous, and godly—serious and diligent in the performance of duty, conscientious in shunning every sin; you must lay your accounts to meet with such assaults. Despisers of religion, and mockers at serious persons and serious things, are now so numerous almost every where, that you cannot hope to escape, unless you sequester yourselves wholly from the world. If you be singular, and to be truly religious in these days you must be singular, you must stand as the mark of the scorner. Admonished of your danger, and warned of the temptations you must encounter, you ought, therefore to stand on your guard, if you would hold fast and persevere in your christian course. On every trying occasion you must call up all your courage and all your patience, that you may be fortified against that "fear of man which bringeth a snare." Sensible of your own weakness, you should repair to the fountain of divine succours for that grace and



strength which are necessary to keep you stedfast. To all the fiery darts with which you are assailed, you must oppose the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand in an evil hour and in a day of temptation. The conflict is severe; but, for your encouragement, the rewards of victory are great and glorious. If you endure to the end, you shall be saved. If you be faithful unto death, you shall receive a crown of life.

This naturally leads us to the

III. Third general division of our subject, which was to shew the motives which we have to encourage us to hold fast, and persevere in our christian course. Here an ample field opens; but we must not enlarge. Let a few leading particulars suffice.

1st. It is honourable to persevere in religion; dishonourable in the highest degree to apostatize.

If the cause in which you have embarked were bad, it would be your duty immediately to relinquish it. But we have already said, that your cause is good. It is the cause of heaven and of all holy beings, and shall in the end prevail. What can be more honourable, than to engage and persevere in such a cause? God applauds, Christ applauds, good angels and good men are on our side, and approve our conduct, while we continue stedfast. To desert such a glorious cause is not only most base and disgraceful, but the highest folly. After having enlisted under the banners of King Jesus, and solemnly pledged your oath to fight under him as the great captain of your salvation, and never to forsake him, what shame and contempt must you incur by desertion? You act the part of cowards, of fugitives, of traitors; you abandon your post, and desert to the camp of the enemy; you league with devils, conspire with fallen spirits against heaven, and justly deserve to be stigmatized with eternal infamy. Are you afraid of incurring contempt and disgrace, by taking a decided part in the cause of Christ in this world? Consider the everlasting shame and contempt which awaits

you hereafter, ſhould you ignominiouſly forſake your Leader, who, if you continue faithful, will ſoon conduct you to victory and glory. This leads to a,

2d. Second motive to excite you to perſevere, namely, the fatal conſequence of apoſtacy.

"No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." "They only who endure to the end ſhall be ſaved." Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." If you be aſhamed of Chriſt and his cauſe in this world, he will be aſhamed of you when he appears in glory. If you deny him now, he will deny you then, and ſpurn you from his preſence into the blackneſs of darkneſs forever. He will then ſay unto you, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity." You were aſhamed of me and my religion; you turned your backs upon me; you deſerted my cauſe, and went over to my enemies; I now, therefore, reject you. As you have choſen to take part with my enemies, and have joined the hoſts of hell againſt me, with them, you muſt now have your portion "in the lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." O my brethren! how awful is the thought of being rejected by Chriſt at the judgment of the great day! This ſhould deter us from apoſtacy, and excite us to adhere to the cauſe of God, through all temptations and ſufferings.

3d. The third and laſt motive to perſeverance which we ſhall mention is the rewards which await thoſe who continue faithful.

Theſe are illuſtrious beyond conception. Whatever is great or glorious, ſplendid or magnificent in the eyes of mortals, is held up for our encouragement. "The fruit of the tree which grows in the midſt of the paradiſe of God, the morning ſtar, the hidden manna,



the white ſtone, and the new name, glory, honour, and immortality," are all preſented to our view, to excite us to perſevere with patience. "Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him ſhall the Son of man alſo confeſs before the angels of God." All who have made an open profeſſion of Chriſt, and have continued ſtedfaſt to the end, ſhall be owned by him as his faithful friends and followers. When "he cometh in the clouds and every eye ſhall ſee him," he will then acknowledge them in the preſence of an aſſembled univerſe. "Then ſhall he ſay unto them on his right hand, Come, ye bleſſed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." You have confeſſed my name and adhered to my cauſe with firmneſs and fidelity in the midſt of all trials, and for my ſake have ſuffered reproach and perſecution; come now and receive your reward. You have taken up your croſs and followed me through good report and through bad report: for that croſs, I now preſent you with a never fading crown. You "have overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of my teſtimony"—come and "ſit down with me in my kingdom, as I alſo have overcome and ſat down with my father in his kingdom." "Then ſhall theſe go away into life eternal."

My brethren, theſe are great things; ambition can aſpire to nothing higher. A crown, not an earthly and coruptible, but a heavenly and incorruptible crown, a crown of life, a crown of glory, a maſſy and eternal crown; a kingdom, not an earthly, but a heavenly kingdom, which endureth for ever; an inheritance, not an earthly, but a heavenly inheritance, an inheritance incorrupitble, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, are all held up to our view, to animate us in our chriſtian courſe. In a word, whatever is implied in that comprehenſive and emphatical word *heaven*, is promiſed as the reward of our perſeverance. What greater encouragement can we deſire? Encouraged by theſe bright proſpects, animated by theſe glorious hopes, "let us run with patience the race ſet before us."

and "hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown." Let us not "be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

We have now pointed out to you the doctrines which you are to hold fast, and the christian duties in which you ought to persevere; the temptations to apostacy, against which you ought to guard; and the motives you have to excite you to be stedfast, have also been set before you. It now only remains to conclude in the

IV. Fourth place, with an exhortation suited to the subject and the occasion.

From a view of the whole subject many duties arise. Bear with me a little longer, while I press these upon you with all the warmth and energy of which I am capable. "Hold fast till I come." Be stedfast in the doctrines of the gospel. Suffer not yourselves to be carried away by a fondness for new opinions. "Examine all things; hold fast that which is good." "To the law and to the testimony," make your last appeal. Allow not yourselves to be seduced by a wordy orator, or noisy declaimer, how plausible soever his scheme may at first appear; or whatever absurd consequences he may pretend to draw from the sound doctrines in which you have been educated. It is not necessary you should be able to answer every objection of every infidel, or caviller against your faith. Some of the religious doctrines you hold, may subject you to derision; because they are opposed to the corrupt bias of the human heart, and humiliating to the pride of man: but this is an argument of their truth, rather than of their falshood. This is the true reason why some of the leading truths of the gospel are vilified and opposed by such multitudes in the present age. In every branch of christian practice be diligent, punctual, and conscientious. "Study in all things to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour, by living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." An exemplary life, and a steady adherence to duty may draw



upon you the rage and hatred of wicked and worldly men, and expose you to great evils in the present life: But let none of these things move you. Pursue the plain path of duty wherever it leads, and leave events to God. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain." He who rideth upon the wings of the wind, and governs the tempest in all its wasting fury, can make all the unruly passions of men, and even the very malignity of devils, co-operate for the promoting of his own glory and the good of his own people. Never be ashamed of religion: it is the supreme honour of a rational and immortal creature; and ought to be your boast and your glory. *Saints*, *hypocrites*, *enthusiasts*, are the epithets which the votaries of vice, and the sons of fashionable dissipation may bestow upon you. They will deride you on account of your prayers and strict attention to other religious duties: but let not this tempt you to neglect those duties, or to slur them over in a cold or careless manner, as is the custom of some modern, fashionable professors of christianity. With a manly and christian firmness hold on in your course; and count it all joy to suffer reproach for the sake of Christ. Risk not eternal misery, through dread of a profane sneer, nor suffer yourselves to be bantered out of eternal happiness by the raillery of impious fools and infidels. Shrink not from the cross of Christ, when called to take it up. "He endured the cross and despised the shame" for you; he suffered all manner of indignities; shed his blood, and laid down his life to redeem you; why then should you think it hard to submit to a little scorn, reproach, or persecution, for his sake? In a cause so good, we should not be backward to make great sacrifices. What is a little worldly loss and temporal inconveniency, in comparison with a testimony of a good conscience, and that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which awaits every persevering christian? "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "We should chearfully suffer the loss of all things for Christ; neither should

we count our lives dear to ourselves, that we may finish our course with joy."

Let your conduct be always uniform and consistent; let your lives correspond with your profession. Nothing is more to be lamented, than the inconsistency, which we too often see in the characters of professors. It brings unmerited reproach upon religion; it grieves its friends; it hardens its enemies: to profane infidels, it presents a convenient handle, which they seize with a malignant pleasure, and improve, with the malice of devils, to blacken all religion. Thus religion is wounded through the sides of its professed friends.

Once more then be consistent. Sincere and unaffected piety has a charm in it which is not easily resisted. Few are so abandoned as not to feel its force. A sober, righteous, and godly life, will command respect, even from the wicked; and whatever be the language of their mouths, in their hearts they cannot altogether withold their approbation.

Would you hold fast, learn to live in the exercise of faith. No part of the christian armour is more necessary. Faith works by love; purifies the heart; cleanses from sin; and overcomes the world. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." It gives such a full conviction of the reality and importance of things eternal and invisible, that earthly objects in a manner disappear, and all temptations from the honours, pleasures, and profits of this world, are disarmed of their force. In the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, you may see the efficacy of faith in this view, and the wonders it hath wrought. With the eye of faith, pointed to things future and eternal, and living under a deep impression of these you will be in little danger of apostacy; you will be stedfast to the end.

To the daily exercise of faith add prayer and watching. Our Saviour joins these two together. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Both are of high importance and absolutely necessary in the christian life. Encompassed by a whole host of enemies, you have need of the utmost vigilance, to guard against them. Your own weakness and insufficiency, the all-sufficiency of the Saviour, your entire and constant dependance on divine aid, the express command to ask, and the express promise that it shall be given, all combine to urge you to the throne of mercy, that you "may find grace to help in a time of need." Without assistance from above, without the continual influence of the Holy Spirit, you cannot persevere; and these you cannot expect without prayer.



Would you stand fast, beware of presumptuously rushing into temptations, which you have it in your power to avoid. This is to engage contrary to orders, and to enter the quarters of the enemy without the promise or the prospect of support. When this is the case, what can you expect but a shameful defeat? let the young, especially, be admonished to shun the society of those who despise or make light of religion; than which, as you have been often told, there is not a more dangerous temptation to apostacy. We have numbers among us who make a mock of all religion, and ridicule every thing that is serious. Shun all such, as you would the most deadly serpent; and have no fellowship with them, unless it be to reclaim them. Permit me, my dear young friends, to press this matter a little. Many are the warnings I have given you; this probably will be the last. Attend, I beseech you, to the voice of wisdom and experience; open your eyes and view the numerous wrecks around you, that, being warned of your danger, you may keep clear of the fatal rocks on which such multitudes have split and perished forever. How many amiable and promising youths, the hope of their parents, and the darlings of their teachers, have we seen ruined in soul and body, by the seductions of loose and profane company? Familiarity with sin and sinners is dangerous; it is dreadful. Progress in vice is, for the most part, gradual and insensible. The ingenuous youth always feels some regret for departing innocence. The influence of bad example, custom, fashion, habit, familiarize

him with ſin, take off from the horror of vice, and lead on the devoted victim, ſtep by ſtep, in the path of the deſtroyer. How many have, by theſe means, been brought to perpetrate without ſhame or remorſe, and even to glory in crimes, at the very thought of which they once ſhuddered? "Be not deceived," my young friends: "evil communications corrupt good manners." Vice is of a contagious nature, and ſheds its poiſon on all who come within its reach. Even thoſe who are advanced in years, and confirmed in habits of virtue, feel its influence. How unſpeakable then muſt be the danger of the young and inexperienced? If then you wiſh to rejoice the hearts of your pious parents, who tremble for your ſituation, and ſave them from the unparalleled affliction of giving you up for loſt, and weeping over your ruins, flee the ſociety of the diſſolute and profane. If you would perſevere in the peaceful paths of religion; die comfortably; eſcape eternal miſery; and obtain never fading felicity hereafter, ſhun, O ſhun, idle, vicious, diſſipated, debauched companions. "Their way is the way to death, their ſteps take hold on hell*." Such ought to be deteſted and ſhunned by all; old and young, of every age and ſex. Let all then who name the name of Chriſt ſhun this, and every other appearance of evil; and be ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion and practice of religion.

"I have no greater joy" ſaith an apoſtle, "than to hear that my children walk in the truth." To every faithful miniſter of the goſpel, nothing can afford greater joy, than to ſee thoſe over whom he has watched with the anxiety of a father, walking ſtedfaſtly in the paths of truth and righteouſneſs. On the other hand, nothing can fill him with deeper ſorrow, than to ſee thoſe of whom he once had ſome comfortable hopes, falling away from their profeſſion, and "turning with the dog

* I recommend to the ſerious and attentive peruſal of all my young readers, two ſermons lately publiſhed by the Rev. Daniel M'Calla of Wappetaw. They appear to me well calculated to benefit the youth of this country, and ought to be read by all young people.



to his vomit, and with the ſow that was waſhed to her wallowing in the mire." My dear chriſtian friends, I am now about to take my departure from you; and wherever God is pleaſed to caſt my lot, and whatever my circumſtances may be, it will always give joy to hear that you abide in the truth, and perſevere in your chriſtian courſe. In what manner I have lived and laboured among you, is not for me to ſay, and will beſt appear on that great deciſive day, when we muſt all ſtand at the bar of heaven. Whatever may have been the failings of an imperfect ſinful man, ſubject to human error and human weakneſs, my heart aſſures me that I have ſincerely endeavoured to promote the ſalvation of your ſouls. I know that I muſt give an account of my miniſtry among you; and you ought alſo to remember, that you muſt give an account of the improvement you make of the inſtructions and admonitions you have received. "Remember, therefore, how you have received and heard, and hold faſt." Save me the painful and mortifying reflection, of having ſpent nearly twenty years of the prime and vigour of my life, without any fruit of my labour among you. There is no other way in which you can do this, but by exhibiting the genuine effects of the word preached in a converſation ſuch as becometh the goſpel of Chriſt, and by perſevering in it to the end of your lives. If therefore you have any reſpect for the memory of one who has long laboured among you; of one who ſincerely deſires, and ardently prays for your eternal welfare, and whom nothing but what appears to be the voice of providence, could have ſeparated from you, grant this *one*, this *laſt* requeſt—"hold faſt—be faithful unto death that you may receive a crown of life." To the care and protection of "him who is able to keep you from falling, and to preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of his glory with exceeding joy," I commit you. May he guide you through life, ſupport you in death, and be your portion throughout eternity.

I thought to have concluded here; but I cannot eaſily reſiſt the inclination which I feel, to drop a word,

at parting, to ſecure and impenitent ſinners. I muſt therefore intreat your indulgence a moment longer. It may be thought a departing from my ſubject; but their danger is ſo imminent, and their condition ſo deplorable, that no opportunity of perſuading them to attend to "the things which belong to their peace," ought to be neglected. And may it not be hoped, that the particular circumſtances in which I now ſtand, and the probability of their ſeeing my face and hearing my voice no more, will give additional weight to this laſt addreſs?

And O careleſs, thoughtleſs creatures! what ſhall I ſay to you? What can I ſay, which has not already been often ſaid? May the all-commanding voice of him who firſt called you into exiſtence, this *once* accompany the feeble words of a mortal, carry them home with divine energy to your hearts, and "create you anew in Chriſt Jeſus."

Hitherto you have reſiſted all the endearing calls of the goſpel, and hardened your hearts againſt the moſt tremendous threatenings from the word of God. He who made you has borne long with ſome of you. You have abuſed his patience; you have deſpiſed his mercy; and notwithſtanding all the pains he has taken with you, "you are yet in the gall of bitterneſs and the bond of iniquity"—ſtrangers to religion, and under the power and dominion of ſin. And while you are in this condition, ſhall I ſpeak comfort to you, or exhort you to perſevere in your preſent courſe? This would be to lead you blindfold to eternal ruin. For the ſuppoſition is, that you are poſting on in the broad way which leadeth down to the chambers of death. Is this ſuppoſition indeed true? It certainly is, if the word of God be true. And is it not high time for you to make a ſolemn pauſe, and ſeriouſly to conſider your perilous ſituation? "Be aſtoniſhed O Heavens!" here are rational, immortal, accountable creatures—creatures who muſt ſurvive the diſſolution of nature, ſee the heavens and the earth on fire,—ſtand at the awful tribunal of an omniſcient judge, and receive according to their works—and yet



they are regardleſs of their future deſtination, and cannot be perſuaded to think what will become of them forever. O ſinners! be aſſured, while you continue to reject the grace of the goſpel—while you are living in the contempt or neglect of religion, and are "ſerving divers luſts and paſſions," you are the enemies of God. Awful ſtate indeed! But what is ſtill more terrible, God is your enemy. And O what an enemy! "He is wiſe in heart, and mighty in ſtrength; who hath hardened himſelf againſt him, and hath proſpered?" Infinite wiſdom, armed with almighty power, almighty power, directed by infinite wiſdom, you can neither evade nor reſiſt. The cauſe in which you are engaged is diſhonourable; it is dangerous; it is deſperate. Omnipotence itſelf is armed againſt you; Jeſus of Nazareth, who hath ſo often bathed his ſword and waſhed his feet in the blood of his enemies, is againſt you; all the armies of heaven are in array againſt you. How great ſoever your numbers, though ſwelled by countleſs legions of apoſtate ſpirits, you never can ſucceed. "You ſhall be ſlain all of you." "You ſhall be as ſtubble before the devouring flame; and there is a day coming which ſhall burn you up, and leave neither root nor branch." The lion of the tribe of Judah will rend you in pieces; he will "conſume you with the breath of his mouth, and deſtroy you with the brightneſs of his coming." Be perſuaded, therefore, without delay to abandon a cauſe ſo deſperate. Come out from among the enemies of King Jeſus; draw up to the ſtandard of his croſs; join yourſelves to his faithful followers. Here only you can find peace and ſecurity. Now he is holding out the ſcepter of peace to you, and entreating you to lay down the weapons of your rebellion. If you refuſe, that ſcepter of peace will be transformed into a rod of iron, with which you ſhall be daſhed in pieces, like a potter's veſſel. Once more then and for the laſt time, let me intreat you to reflect upon your danger and eſcape for your lives. "Turn ye to your ſtrong hold ye priſoners of hope." "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" "Repent and believe the

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gospel—believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved." With my parting breath, I would recommend religion to you. This only can effectually support you under all the evils and calamities of life; this only can pour consolation into your hearts at the trying hour of death, and constitute your supreme felicity throughout eternity. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her."

Permit me now to take my leave of you all, and to conclude with the words of the apostle. "Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

*F I N I S.*